

STATE SENATOR • RAYMOND E. BASHAM • 8TH DISTRICT

Basham Press Release

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Basham Calls on Congress to Increase Public Transit Funding in Michigan *Resolution for Amtrak expansion approved by Senate committee*

LANSING—The Senate Appropriations Committee voted today to approve Senate Resolution 200, a resolution sponsored by Sen. Ray Basham (D-Taylor) that calls on Congress to support federal funding to expand Amtrak's passenger rail capacity and number of routes in Michigan. The resolution has bipartisan support and passed today's committee hearing unanimously. It now moves to the full Senate for consideration.

"With skyrocketing gasoline prices, traffic congestion, and limited public transportation alternatives, ridership on all of Michigan's Amtrak routes has increased 50 percent," said Basham. "This is the right time to support greener, cost-effective transportation options for Michigan residents and take advantage of this opportunity for economic growth."

Basham's resolution urges Congress and President Bush to support funding for expansions to Michigan's Amtrak system after the recent passage of House Resolution 6003 in Congress. HR 6003 gives states access to potentially \$500 million per year in capital grant money for five years for improvements to passenger rail infrastructures.

Ridership has increased 47 percent on all three Michigan Amtrak routes in the last six years. The Wolverine route, from Pontiac through Detroit to Chicago, increased its passenger load 2.5 percent in 2007 alone. The state-supported Blue Water route between Port Huron and Chicago saw increased ridership of 3 percent in 2007, and ridership on the state-supported Pere Marquette route between Grand Rapids and Chicago increased 2.8 percent. All three corridors experienced sold-out trains in 2007, some on a regular basis, which may have limited their true earning potential. Over the first seven months of the 2008 fiscal year, Pere Marquette ridership is up 9.8 percent and Blue Water ridership has increased 6.5 percent. Revenues have grown as well, from 4.5 to 9.2 percent.

With limited routes available, Amtrak trains still contributed \$500,000 of unanticipated ticket income to the State of Michigan. Trends suggest that demand for passenger rail services will continue to increase, and without the necessary infrastructure improvements, the state will not have the resources to meet the demand. Sen. Basham's resolution requests the federal funding that is critical to expanding cleaner, greener transit in Michigan. A complete copy of the resolution can be accessed at

[http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?2008-SR-0200.](http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?2008-SR-0200)

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